

## **Michigan Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission**

### **Meeting Minutes – FINAL**

September 12, 2015, 9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

Heart of West Michigan United Way

118 Commerce Ave., S.W., Grand Rapids, MI

#### **Attendance**

**Present:** Nasim Ansari, Scott T. Ayotte, Connie Dang, Soraya Kim, Jin-Kyu Koh, David Long, Mahima Mahadevan, Toshiki Masaki and Joe Tasma

**On phone:** Willie Dechavez, Roland Hwang, Grace Lee, Guozhen Lu and Jeff Vang

**Ex-officio:** Bing Goei, MONA

**Staff:** Mary McLellan, Commission Liaison-MDCR and Denise Yee Grim, MAPAAC Community Liaison

**Unable to attend:** Asim Alavi, Jamie Hsu, Hannah Feikema, Anand Kumar, Ryan Rosario and Tsu-Yin Wu

#### **I. Call to Order**

Vice Chair Connie Dang called the regular meeting of the Michigan Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission to order at 9:05 a.m. on September 12, 2015 and welcomed the commissioners to West Michigan.

Connie Dang thanked United Way for hosting the meeting and Minnie Morey for assisting in the coordination of the meeting and inviting the APA community members who were present in the room. Connie continued by introduced Bing Goei, executive director of the Michigan Office of New Americans and welcomed the 15 community members.

#### **II. Approval of June 19, 2015 Meeting Minutes**

Connie Dang asked if there were any additional comments or changes to the draft minutes. There was no changes to the minutes. Nasim Ansari motioned to approve the meeting minutes and Joe Tasma seconded. Motion passed.

#### **III. Budget Update**

Denise reported on the budget update on behalf of Tsu-Yin Wu, Trustee. Denise referred to the budget report; the total expenses as of September 4<sup>th</sup> are \$92,371.00 with a net total of \$17,629.00 remaining. There was no comments or concerns regarding the budget.

#### **IV. SIG's Plan Initiative Updates:**

1. **SIG 1 Report:** Mahima gave an overview of the SIG objectives and introduced the members. This past year, SIG 1 has been focused on understanding the needs of the APA community. Once the needs are understood and prioritized, they will determine the most effective way to communicate the information to the appropriate state departments, legislators and the Governor.

SIG 1 has supported the Asian American Engagement Coalition (AAEC) which comprised of five APA groups, which are: ACJ (commissioner Roland Hwang is a part of this organization), HAAP, (commissioner Tsu-Yin Wu is a part of this organization), MAI Family Services, BAPAC and NaFFAA. It is convened by the APIAVote-MI. In July, SIG 1 sponsored the AAEC's strategic session where they developed three policy agenda items for their committee that they could express to the Governor and to the legislators.

Those three items:

1. **Fred Korematsu Day Bill**, which MAPAAC has endorsed. The House of Representatives has introduced the bill to make January 30<sup>th</sup> a Fred Korematsu Recognition Day in the state of MI. The coalition is creating a campaign plan and MAPAAC is sitting in as a partner and one of the lead organizers to help develop the campaign. The coalition has planned a “Lobby Day” to assist in moving the bill forward. SIG 1 will share details about the Lobby Day soon.

In addition to the bill, the larger vision is to have a section devoted to the Asian American history within the K-12 social studies curriculum, with the hope that it will help greater understanding and recognition of the Asian Americans in Michigan and acknowledge their rich contributions to our history. The coalition plans to approach the Department of Education to discuss how this can be accomplished.

2. **Supporting immigrant access to health and social services.** The AAEC coalition is made up of organizations that provides direct service to the community. They see a lot of disparities and gaps in the health services available to the new immigrants, especially with language access and funding. They are developing a plan to work with the department of health and human services and that is where MAPAAC can assist in connection with the state departments with their initiatives.
3. **Supporting election administration and reforms that increase access to the polls.** Special focus on language access and the rights of the individual voters at the polls that they are not aware of. This may include translation of the ballot and bringing in someone to help in translating the ballot.

SIG 1’s next year’s activity is to gather the information from other SIGs, highlighting the top priorities from the town hall meetings and surveys and establishing a process to convey those priorities to the relevant State departments.

**Question:** *Do we have guidelines and/or restrictions on how commissioners can engage in specific bills in approaching legislators (lobbying) on specific bills?* Mary will share information on lobbying and will share it with the commissioners. Nasim and Bing advised the commissioners to contact their own senators and representatives in their districts directly since it is a powerful way to support the Korematsu Day Bill.

Mahima commented that the engagement coalition’s three policy areas were discussed with the APA Legislative Caucus members who explained that the goals/objectives of the APA Legislative Caucus come from the idea of engagement coalition. They also shared how they can assist the coalition to push the agenda with the Legislators and how MAPAAC can assist in connecting the State Departments and Governor’s office and APA Legislative Caucus.

Denise mentioned that the next APA Legislative Caucus meeting will be in October and she will email the information to commissioners for consideration to attend. Connie invited the community members to submit their email addresses for future communication with the commission.

2. **SIG 2 Report:** Denise spoke on behalf Ryan Rosario, SIG 2 leader. SIG 2 have conducted eight town hall meetings to date. Grace Lee shared the next two town hall meeting, which are: September 18th with the Korean community at the Korean Cultural Center of MI and September 19th with the Chinese community at the Chinese Community Center.

Denise highlighted the survey results summary. She reported that we had 185 respondents and Steve Mitchell, consultant, wrote the summary. The first three pages were Denise's analysis and the latter pages were from Steve Mitchell results. Toshiki mentioned that he will be conducting a survey, translated in Japanese, at the Japanese festival in October.

Connie commented that in comparing the APIAVote-MI survey and MAPAAC's survey have identified similar issues were identified. Denise reiterated that this was an informal survey and the survey findings are to assist the commissioners in their strategic planning for 2016.

Connie commented that we will begin the dialogue on survey results in December during our strategic planning meeting. Due to limited resource (financial and human resources), we will focus on the low hanging fruits and determine our short and long term goals.

3. **SIG 3 Report:** Roland Hwang, SIG 3 leader, reported that Bullying is one of the issues from their past survey. He announced that SIG 3 will be hosting an anti-bullying forum and roundtable discussion along with ACA-Chinese Community Center and other organization partners on November 7 from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. The speakers are: Ron Aramaki, psychologist and counselor, Melissa Kieseewetter, MDCR Bullying Specialist, Dr. Gail Parker, Psychologist and Mary Cooper, principal of Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary.

SIG 3 is also working on the 2016 Fred Korematsu recognition presentation at GVSU on January 28, U of M Law School on January 28<sup>th</sup>, and Northville High School on February 1<sup>st</sup>.

4. **SIG 4 report:** Soraya Kim, SIG 4 leader, talked about the May APA Heritage Day Celebration with APIAVote-MI. Secondly, she shared the upcoming Recognition & Appreciation Dinner on September 23<sup>rd</sup> at Schoolcraft College in Livonia. They will be recognizing the APA community centers and will thank our strategic partners: APACC, APIAVote-MI, Asian Center- SEMI, Burma Center, CAPA, and MAI Family Services. Invitations are also sent to the state department directors and the APA Legislative Caucus members.

The 2016 APA Heritage Day Celebration will be on May 10<sup>th</sup> in partnership with APIAVote- MI.

#### **V: Commissioner's Terms and Application:**

A friendly reminder as of November 1<sup>st</sup>, some commissioner's terms will end. If the present commissioners wish to be reappointed, they need to fill out an online application. Contact Denise or Mary on the application process. If the commissioner is not interested in reapplying, please notify Jamie or Connie, so he/she may notify the governor's office of the open slot. Mary stated that there is no confirmation generated once the online form is filled out. She invited the commissioners to call her to double check with the Governor's office on their application or to personally give them a call directly.

#### **VI. Annual Report Preparation:**

Connie requested the SIG leaders to transfer the SIG work into a report. Denise will email a template to the commissioners and they will email it in to Connie by November 7<sup>th</sup>. Connie will compile the draft report and have it available at the December 4th commission meeting for discussion and approval. Mary said the report would have to be posted on our website and possibly distributed to the state agencies. She will work on the list of relevant agencies and their contacts.

## **VII. Administrative Update**

Denise asked the commissioners to turn in their expense reimbursements along with the original receipts by September 15<sup>th</sup>. The fiscal year ends on September 30<sup>th</sup>. The MDCR protocol of meeting minutes: The draft commission minutes will be posted eight days after the commission meeting. Once the minutes are approved, they will be posted two weeks after the approval. Denise will email the draft minutes to all the commissioners for review within five days and all changes must be submitted prior to eight days deadline.

## **VIII. Next Commission Meeting:**

Date: Friday, December 4, 2015

Location: AAA Michigan Building, 1 Auto Club Dr., Dearborn, MI

Time: 8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Topic: 2016 strategic planning for the SIGs following the commission meeting

Suggestion: Shorten our commission meeting and have a longer strategic planning meeting.

Invite Steve Mitchell to give an analysis of the survey (25-20 mins).

There was a discussion of 2016 commission meetings: There are four meeting a year. Fridays are okay and the discussion continues by phone or email if we would like to have one meeting on a Saturday. Possibly have a meeting in Kalamazoo in June.

## **IX. New Business:**

Bing shared that MONA has created a new program called, MITS - Michigan International Talent Solutions. It will be focused on immigrants who may not have a bachelor degree, but have skills in the skilled trade economy. MITS will help them identify job opportunities and licensing requirements, etc... Annie Fenton, who use to be part of the Upwardly Goal program is now with MITS.

MONA will announce a pilot one-stop-shop portal in the near future. Several state departments will have representation at this site for immigrants and refugees to be able to ask questions about the available resources for their transition into Michigan.

Connie commented that this may be one of the initiatives for a SIG for 2016; how can we support MONA in educating the community about the different types of services offered by MONA and how can we expand the communication to the communities with different languages.

Mahima announced the APIAVote-MI is having their annual dinner on September 27<sup>th</sup> at Pi Banquet Hall in Southfield at 6 p.m. They will be recognizing Sook Wilkinson and she will be receiving the Community Champion Award, MAI Family Services is receiving an Advocate Award, and Mohammed and Louxoi are receiving the youth leader's awards. MAPAAC has purchased four tickets and Mahima is coordinating the attendees.

Toshiki announced that there will be a new Consul-General of Japan appointed to Michigan. His name is Mr. Mitsuhiro Wada and his appointment began on August 24<sup>th</sup>. He requested that the commission send the Consul General a list of any activities going forward.

Mary commented that she was at the Michigan Law Revision Commission and they were taking comments on driver's licenses for immigrants, specifically undocumented. She asked if anyone is aware of this being a problem to the APA community. She wanted the commissioners to be aware of this issue.

## **X. Public Comments:**

Leela Dhakal was present as a representative from the West Michigan Bhutanese community. They are looking for health access and funding. There are 3,000 families in one location and are all immigrants – Bhutani refugees and speak Nepali. When they arrived in the US, they suffered intense cultural shock and trauma from the refugee camps and family separation, leading to high suicide rate within the community. They need help in the following: Individual and group orientations in preparing them for American life and culture, vocational training, civic engagement, school registrations and transportation. She has been translating for 7 years to help people get their driving permits. They require translations of driver's licenses manual to ensure that Bhutanese immigrants understand the laws to obtain their licenses. Some refugees were arrested after receiving their licenses and some were being deported due to lack of understanding of the laws.

They are looking for Angel donors to purchase a building to provide resources for the Bhutanese community e.g. citizenship and ESL classes. They are in the process of obtaining a 501c3 within the next 2-3 months. Currently, volunteers are helping informally by providing services to their community to address bullying and violence. There are 6,000 refugees in Grand Rapids and Lansing areas, majority live in Kentwood.

Connie advised establishing a community non-profit organization. Next they can consider some grant writing to apply for funding. As a commission, we can incorporate their case into the annual report presented to the state agencies for consideration in terms of supporting of the new building.

Bing commented that the Michigan Health & Human Services has an office that deals with refugee resettlements. He felt that there is little knowledge of this service in the West Michigan Asian population. Deportation involves legal issues that need to be dealt with by establishing advocacy programs for the APA communities.

He hoped that MAPAAC can revisit their rules and bylaws to figure out a way to be supportive and address the immediate needs of this community. He commented that he will take this information to other departments to solicit support. He commented that we don't have the perfect answers immediately, but we can take some steps to address the issues.

Connie commented that we need to have more conversations around this case and reach out to the state agencies to see how we can come together to support this community. Connie suggested that Denise, and her, possibly with Roland, should have further conversation on this topic. Toshiki suggested that we provide a summary of issues and distribute to the commissioners as talking points. David suggested to contact their legislators to address the long term issues as more refugees are expected to arrive and settle in the area. Jin-Kyu commented that these are complex situations that may involve legal issues that may not be possible for the commission to address.

Next speaker: Martha Gonzalez-Cortes, the new MDCR Community Relations Director. She was interested in defining community outreach and engagement from the department's perspective. For 2016, she is interested in tackling some key issues, about how we do outreach, how we engage the communities, how we openly listen to diverse communities and how we identify and train the next civil rights leaders in the state. She expressed interest in attending MAPAAC meetings in the future. She stated that the posting of the MDCR executive director's position is out and would like for us to share this information in our community. Mary will email the posting to the commissioners.

Martha also shared Michigan's SB445 Anti Sanctuary City bill and other issues of conversation in the U.S. Congress regarding immigration and legal status. She commented that Theresa Tran, APIAVote-MI executive director, is a Kellogg foundation fellow. They are looking for more

applicants to be fellows from the APA community in Michigan. She will share information with Mary and Denise to share with the commissioners in the future.

**XI. Announcements:**

Mr. Kaushik Nag, President of the West Michigan Bengali Cultural Association shared the event, *Glimpse of India*, on October 24<sup>th</sup> and invite the commissioners to attend the event.

Minnie Morey shared information about the Asian Gala's history. It will be the 6<sup>th</sup> year of celebration and will announce the date once they secure the keynote speaker.

**XII. Adjournment:**

A motion from Soraya Kim to adjourn the meeting, Joe Tasma seconded. Motion passed.

The meeting concluded at 11:45 a.m.

Minutes prepared by: Denise Yee Grim, October 19, 2015 (delayed due to illness)

Minutes submitted by:

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Asim Alavi, Secretary